



Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409

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Policy # 2026 - 162

POLICY TITLE: PUBLIC COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy Objective	To establish a clear and consistent process for receiving, documenting, responding to and tracking complaints from ratepayers or residents within the Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409
Authority	Municipalities Act, LAFOIP Resolution

DEFINITIONS:

Council – means the Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409 Council

Employees – means the Administrator and or the public works department of workers for the RM

Public – means the rate payers or general public, those who are not elected or employed by the RM

Adult – Means anyone over the age of 18 years of age

Frivolous – means a request that has no serious purpose or business value

Unacceptable Behaviour – means behaviour that will not be tolerated, including but not limited to behaviour that can be damaging physically or mentally, is illegal or would not be welcomed in a standard place of business.

Vexatious – means a request with the intent to embarrass, harass or annoy the recipient(s) or subject(s) of the request, and without the intention to seek genuine redress for the matter in question.

Malicious – means a request or complaint that is deliberately intended to cause harm, distress or damage to another person's feelings, reputation or property.

POLICY:

OBJECTIVE:

The Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409 want to ensure that all complaints are handled in a fair, transparent, and efficient manner while respecting the rights and privacy of all parties involved.

This policy will apply to complaints regarding the following:

- Alleged violations of RM Bylaws.
- Concerns related to municipal services or operations
- Matters that may require investigation by Municipal Staff

This policy does not apply to matters under the jurisdiction of other agencies or levels of government, including but not limited to the RCMP, Provincial Ministries or Federal Authorities.

COMPLAINT SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:

All Complaints Must:

1. Be submitted in writing using the Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409 complaint form through written or email correspondence,
2. Be signed by the complainant,
3. Include the complainants full name and contact information,
4. Provide sufficient details regarding the nature of the complaint, including location, date, and a description of the issue where applicable.

Anonymous complaints generally will not be investigated unless the matter involves a significant risk to public safety or municipal infrastructure.

NEIGHBOUR DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Where a complaint involves a dispute between neighbouring property owners or residents, the RM encourages individuals to make reasonable efforts to resolve the matter directly with the other party prior to submitting a formal complaint.

The RM recognizes that many neighbour disputes can be resolved through communication and cooperation without the need for municipal enforcement.

Where appropriate, RM Administration may request confirmation that the complainant has attempted to resolve the issue directly before initiating an investigation. This requirement does not apply where there are safety concerns or where immediate enforcement action may be necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND INVESTIGATION

Upon receipt of a written complaint, RM Administration will review the complaint to determine whether it falls within municipal jurisdiction, and advise the complainant of the decision to proceed or not;

Where appropriate, the complainant will be referred to the applicable RM Staff or Councillor for investigation;

Staff or the appointed Councillor may request additional information from the complainant if required to proceed with the investigation;

Investigations will be conducted in accordance with applicable RM bylaws, policies and provincial legislation, including but not limited to the Municipalities Act or the Planning and Development Act.

Once the investigation is started correspondence with the complainant will be sent to indicate the beginning of the investigation into the complaint. A decision will be made within 10 working days after the date of the receipt of the complaint. Unless Councils input is required and the first meeting date is later than 10 days. Once the investigation is complete, a formal response will be sent to the complainant with the outcome of the

investigation and any actions required. The file will then be closed and considered complete.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

The RM of Buffalo recognizes the importance of protecting personal information and will make reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of complaints where possible. Personal information collected as part of the complaint process will be managed in accordance with The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (LAFOIP). Information will only be used or disclosed for the purposes of investigating, administering and enforcing municipal bylaws or policies, or as otherwise authorized or required by law.

LIMITATIONS ON CONFIDENTIALITY

While the RM will make reasonable efforts to protect the identity of complaints, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Complainants should be aware that:

- Evidence submitted in support of a complaint may be required to be disclosed during an investigation, enforcement proceeding or legal action
- Information provided may be shared with the subject of the complaint or other relevant parties only where necessary to ensure procedural fairness
- The complainant may be required to provide additional information or testimony and may be called as a witness if enforcement action or prosecution occurs.

As a result, the identity of the complainant may become known during the course of the investigation or legal proceedings.

FRIVOLOUS, VEXATIOUS OR MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

The RM reserves the right to decline to investigate complaints that are determined to be:

- Frivolous
- Vexatious
- Repetitive in nature without new information
- Made in bad faith or with the intent to harass or harm another individual

Where repeated frivolous complaints are received from the same individual or household, the RM may limit further correspondence or require additional documentation before proceeding with any further complaints.

ROLE OF COUNCIL

To ensure complaints are documented and processed in accordance with this policy, council members who receive complaints from residents shall refer the complainant to RM Administration. Where the complaint is regarding Administration, Council members shall refer the complainant to the Reeve or Ethic Commissioner.

Council will not investigate individual complaints directly unless the matter is brought forward through the appropriate channels.

ROLE OF ADMINISTRATION

Administration will keep an Annual List of Complaints Received and their status. The List of Complaints received shall be presented as part of the Monthly Administration Report. The List of Complaints shall not have any complaint removed, such that at the end of the year, Council will have a full list.

RECORD KEEPING

All written complaints and related records shall be maintained by RM Administration in accordance with the RM's Record Management Practices and applicable legislation.

INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION

The RM may decline to investigate a complaint where insufficient information is provided to reasonably identify the issue or alleged bylaw violation.

Where necessary and possible, Administration may request additional information from the complainant. If the requested information is not provided within a reasonable timeframe, the complaint may be closed.

WITHDRAWAL OF COMPLAINTS

Once a complaint has been submitted and an investigation has commenced, the RM reserves the right to continue the investigation regardless of whether the complainant withdraws the complaint.

Where a potential bylaw violation or public safety concern exists, the RM may proceed with enforcement in order to protect the interest of the municipality and its residents.

ABUSE OF PROCESS

In order to ensure no Abuse of Process occurs, Administration may:

- Require complaints to be submitted in writing using the prescribed complaint form,
- Require additional supporting information before initiating an investigation
- Decline to investigate complaints that do not meet the requirement of this policy.

RATIONALE:

The Rural Municipality of Buffalo No. 409 wants to provide a consistent procedure of complaints that can be handled at all levels and in a fair manner. By having a complaints policy in effect, Councillors can direct all complaints to be seen and handled by the RM Administration which will then be documented and investigated as need be.

